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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000818

SIPDIS

FOR AF/S WILLS, JAMES AND MARBURG  
FOR DRL WILLET AND GILBRIDE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2019

TAGS: KDEM ASEC PGOV SF

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA VOTES: SITUATION REPORT #4

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR RAYMOND L. BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

**¶11. (U)** Summary: South Africa's National and Provincial elections of April 22 were well organized and peaceful. Charge d'Affaires and Poloff on April 23 visited the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) Results Centre to see how political parties were faring and to gain a better understanding of the commission's tabulation of the results from yesterday's voting. As of mid-afternoon on April 23, the African National Congress (ANC) was inching closer to a two-thirds parliamentary majority while the Democratic Alliance (DA) seemingly locked up the Western Cape, but hovering around 17 percent on the national level. Projections of final outcomes remain somewhat premature as the IEC was still waiting for results from 12,402 voting stations as of 16:00 South Africa time. Some IEC officials suggested that tabulation could be finished in the early morning on April 24. End Summary.

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Latest Projections Positive for ANC, DA  
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**¶12. (U)** Charge d'Affaires and Poloff visited the IEC Results Centre on the afternoon of April 23. Between 15:00 and 16:00 South African time, the ANC had roughly 65.6 percent while the DA had 17 percent of the vote. The Congress of the People's (COPE) total stood at roughly 8 percent of the total. A common theme echoed by political party leaders and journalists at the Centre is that the results show how smaller opposition parties were faring poorly at the polls. One radio commentator on Talk Radio 702 noted that this election "may be the end of small parties as we know them." The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), for instance, had garnered roughly 3 percent of the national vote based on numbers tabulated mid-afternoon.

**¶13. (C)** The Charge d'Affaires spoke to all major party leaders at the Centre and their moods varied from cautious optimism to stoic disappointment. ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe seemed pleased at the way the results favored the ANC, but he was clearly exhausted. Mantashe, a self-described communist and close ally of ANC President, greeted the Charge by saying that he was pleased by the recent decision by the United States to ease restrictions against Cuba. When the Charge told Mantashe that the

United States wants to be one of the first countries to congratulate the ANC after its presumptive victory is declared later this week, he responded favorably and suggested the Charge work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to arrange a meeting with Zuma. ANC Deputy Secretary General Thandi Modise then waved her hand to indicate that maybe Mantashe should rethink the decision to arrange such a meeting through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to which Mantashe laughed and then said he would re-assess the best way for the Charge to meet with the ANC President.

¶4. (C) ANC spokesperson Jesse Duarte gave Zuma's personal cellphone number to the Charge to help facilitate any congratulatory calls to the ANC President. ANC International Affairs adviser Ebrahim Ebrahim told the Charge he was pleased that the United States would consider congratulating Zuma after the election is finalized. Ocongratulating Zuma after the election is finalized.

(Note: Interestingly, former Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad, a close ally of former President Thabo Mbeki, spent several minutes talking with the ANC leaders, many of whom are long-term old friends. End Note.) Off to the side, Modise admitted that the ANC was concerned about the election and noted that the formation of COPE really galvanized the ruling party. She said "my champagne is still on ice, but things are looking up." She told the Charge that she wants the ANC to have a solid relationship with the United States and relayed that she had strong ties on security issues during the 1990s. She specifically praised the partnership forged between South Africa and the United States through visits by the U.S. War Colleges.

¶5. (C) DA leader Helen Zille looked tired, but noted that she expects her party to win Western Cape. She said she

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was pleased that her party has grown so much in recent years. DA Chief Whip Ian Davidson said, "We have Western Cape in the bag and can probably rule it with an absolute majority." He said that the party would look to form coalitions in some areas and assessed that it would be in the Independent Democrats' (ID) best interest to join with the DA in Western Cape if Patricia de Lille's party has hopes for survival. He relayed, "If she goes with the ANC she will kill her party's base even more." Davidson said that Zille has chosen her successor as Cape Town mayor, but seemed embarrassed when he could not recall the leader's name. He noted that Zille would still look over all of Cape Town's affairs and keep the new mayor "under her thumb."

¶6. (SBU) De Lille was clearly disappointed about her party's results when she spoke with the Charge, but remained reserved about the ID's future. (Note: The ID by mid-afternoon on April 23 had only amassed roughly 6 percent of the vote in the Western Cape. End Note.) De Lille's personal assistant Steven Otter admitted that the ID would need to explore all of its options in the future. COPE Deputy President Mbhazima Shilowa greeted the Charge and acknowledged that this "was a great day," but did not offer thoughts on his party's chances.

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IEC Results Centre Running Smoothly  
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¶7. (U) The IEC was posting results in real time both on large electronic video displays and on its website. The results on the video display gave the total number of votes for each party contesting the national and provincial election, but did not have percentages. (Note: The website had percentages in real time. End Note.) Party leaders and journalists swarmed the main floor of the IEC's Results Centre and reacted to many of the changes in totals whenever they were posted. IEC officials were accessible

to the media and to political party leaders. Despite the flurry of activity, the Charge spoke briefly with IEC Chairperson Brigalia Bam, who said the commission is very proud of its work for this election. She thanked the United States for its large election observation effort and noted that the observation mission was the largest for this poll. She then invited the Charge to attend the formal announcement of the election results on April 25. Bam was especially thrilled when the IEC posted the results for the overseas voting, which took place last week. (Note: The DA won the overseas voting in a landslide, capturing more than 7,000 votes. End Note.)

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Comment  
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18. (C) The IEC is inching closer with efficiency and professionalism to finalizing the election results. Party leaders, though obviously exhausted, seem to be assessing and then re-assessing their futures based on the totals coming into the IEC Results Centre. Some party leaders, such as Zille and Mantashe, seem increasingly confident of where their parties stand mid-way through the tabulation process. However, other party leaders such as de Lille and Shilowa, still seem uncertain about what the future holds for their organizations. If the IEC finishes tabulating results by early morning on April 24, all political parties will know their futures sooner rather than later. As it stands, the outlines of the results are shaping up, with ANC forming the next government with a strong majority, and DA continuing as the official opposition in Parliament, but now with the trends likely to lead the Western Cape. The COPE results are better than many expected, but lower than its leadership hoped. The small and micro parties have lost a great deal of ground and may be consigned to political oblivion.

Post will send in additional reporting once results are official.

LA LIME